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SUBJECT: EMBASSY BRASILIA B1, B1/B2, B2 VALIDATION STUDY CY2004

¶1. Summary: In August 2006, the Consular Section of Embassy Brasilia concluded a validation study of the 6,620 B1, B1/B2 and B2 Visas issued by the section in calendar year 2004. Results showed that 83.4% returned, 12.2% did not return, 4.1% never traveled, and data was inconclusive on 0.2%. The initial survey was carried out by telephone and had an initial inconclusive rate of 13.6%. Embassy DHS then used TECS to check our inconclusive cases, providing conclusive data on all but a few cases, greatly increasing the accuracy of our study. End summary.

Definitions

¶2. Post classified the study results into four categories: 1) Confirmed Return or Current Legal Stay in the U.S. - those cases for which Post was able to contact the visa holder and determine a return from the United States and/or travelers still legally present in the U.S.; 2) Confirmed Overstay - those travelers who are still in the United States or who stayed for more than the six months of stay CBP typically authorizes and who did not file for extension; 3) Never Traveled - individuals who have not used their visas and 4) Inconclusive - cases which remain unclear even after obtaining DHS data.

Data Analysis General Observations

¶3. Post determined that 83.4% of all B1, B1/B2 and B2 visa holders who were interviewed by Embassy Brasilia in 2004 left the United States after a temporary visit or were in the U.S. for less than six months. Post confirmed that 12.2% of the travelers failed to return from the United States or misused their visas by remaining in the U.S. for more than six months. 4.1% never traveled, while we were unable to determine the whereabouts of 0.2% of travelers.

¶4. Post noticed that 80.2% of all confirmed overstay cases were issued between August and December 2004. Post attributes this to two factors: 1) a significant decrease in the refusal rate in B1, B1/B2 and B2 issuances, from 57% in January 2004 to 30% in December 2004; and 2) a gradual slide in the dollar - real exchange rate from the highest of 3.1 reals to one dollar in May to 2.7 in December 2004. The stronger Brazilian currency improved the purchasing power of applicants and, therefore, increased their income in USD terms. The strong Brazilian real also made U.S. travel affordable for segments of Brazilian society who previously would never have considered travel to the U.S.

Confirmed Overstay Cases Analysis

¶5. Analyzing the confirmed overstay cases by age revealed that age group most likely to overstay are 21 to 35 year-olds (40.6%), followed by individuals under 14 (20.8%).

¶6. Of the group studied, men are slightly more likely to abuse visas than women (51.5% vs.48.5%).

¶7. Although the majority of B1, B1/B2 and B2 visas in 2004 were issued to the residents of the Federal District, followed by the applicants from the State of Goias (37% compared to 29%); 66.3% of the confirmed overstay cases resided in Goias, and only 19.8% were from the Federal District.

¶8. Interestingly enough, only 2% of all overstays were overcome cases, and only 5.9% had their visas previously denied, whereas 12.9% were limited validity visas.

Methodology

¶9. Utilizing FPP guidelines, principally based on the following cables, 04 STATE 172283 SOP 74: Updated Guidance on Conducting Validation Studies, 00 STATE 63463 Validation Studies - Report on Pilot Project and Recommendations; Validation Studies Handbook (1999); and 99 STATE 43495 - Validation Studies for Anti-Fraud Work - A Simplified Approach, the Consular Section chose a sample of 800 successful visa applicants. Post contacted each and every applicant by phone and then determined the percentage of visa recipients in this particular category who returned to Brazil after a temporary visit to the United States.

¶10. Using CCD data post generated an Excel file of all 6,620 B1, B1/B2 and B2 visas granted in 2004. Next, we organized the spreadsheet according to the following categories: Random Number, Sample Frequency, Gender, DOB, Nationality, phone number, alternate phone number, date to call, first call date, second call date (if missed on the first), third and final call date (if missed on first two) and six result columns: confirmed overstay, confirmed return, probable overstay, inconclusive, and never traveled.

¶11. Subsequently, post generated a random sample of 827 cases, using the Random Number Generator program in Excel, and sorted the spreadsheet by the Random Number Column. After creating a list of

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cases to call, post simplified the call back procedure by organizing the spreadsheet by the Visa Printed Date and creating separate worksheets, one for each month in 2004.

Call-Back Process General Observations

¶12. Originally, Post decided that only the Consular Section's FSNs were to make phone calls to the randomly selected visa holders. The premise for the decision was the idea that it would be easier to establish the current whereabouts of the selected visa holders by not divulging the caller's identity, which is an easier task for a native Portuguese speaker. The section created several scenarios for phone calls such as credit card company data verification, a call from an old friend from school/college, etc. While this strategy proved to be successful in a number of cases, a lot of families were reluctant to give out personal information. However, when U.S. members of the Consular Section made the calls, respondents were much more likely to provide personal information about the whereabouts of the visa holder.

¶13. Soon after commencing, Post discovered that the majority of phone numbers and addresses of the visa holders have changed and that it was difficult to locate the B1, B1/B2 and B2 travelers. Using application forms DS-156 and DS-157 helped determine the location of some of the visa holders with the help of family members, U.S. or work contacts. Often times the Consular staff had to obtain telephone numbers through the Brazilian directory assistance, which considerably slowed down the validation study, but at the same time reduced the number of inconclusive cases.

Using DHS Data

¶14. After completing Stage 1 of the study, Post was unable to determine the whereabouts of 13.6% of all the cases examined. The Embassy's DHS office, however, provided us with the entry/exit data of the 126 inconclusive cases through TECS queries. Having access to the information was a tremendous help in completing the study.

Conclusion

¶15. While we are pleased with the results of the validation study, we managed to identify two problem groups of applicants who tend to breach the terms of their visas: 1) under-14-year-olds, and 2) applicants from the State of Goias. Post is also advising pre-screenerers to improve data entry and verify the accuracy of the information visa candidates provide on their application forms.

¶16. Additionally, the Post's validation study proved to be a successful exercise in cooperation between the Consular Section and DHS. Entry/exit data obtained from Post's DHS team was invaluable to the success of the study and helped us to practically eliminate the number of inconclusive cases, thus making the results of the study far more accurate. The exercise was a vivid reminder of how much consular officers could benefit from direct access to U.S. entry/exit records either through TECS and/or inclusion of such data into the CCD.

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